

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A conversation processing apparatus for holding a conversation with a user, comprising:

first storage means for storing a plurality of pieces of first information concerning a plurality of topics;

second storage means for storing second information concerning a present topic being discussed;

determining means for determining whether to change the topic;

selection means for selecting, when said determining means determines to change the topic, a new topic to change to from among the topics stored in said first storage means; and

changing means for reading the first information concerning the topic selected by said selection means from said first storage means and for changing the topic by storing the read information in said second storage means.

2. A conversation processing apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising:

third storage means for storing a topic which has been discussed with the user in a history;

wherein said selection means selects, as the new topic, a topic other than those stored in the history in said third

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storage means.

3. A conversation processing apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein, when said determination means determines to change the topic in response to the change of topic introduced by the user, said selection means selects a topic which is the most closely related to the topic introduced by the user from among the topics stored in said first storage means.

4. A conversation processing apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein:

the first information and the second information include attributes which are respectively associated therewith;

said selection means selects the new topic by computing a value based on association between the attributes of each piece of the first information and the attributes of the second information and selecting the first information with the greatest value as the new topic, or by reading a piece of the first information, computing the value based on the association between the attributes of the first information and the attributes of the second information, and selecting the first information as the new topic if the first information has a value greater than a threshold.

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5. A conversation processing apparatus according to Claim 4, wherein the attributes include at least one of a keyword, a category, a place, and a time.

6. A conversation processing apparatus according to Claim 4, wherein the value based on the association between the attributes of the first information and the attributes of the second information is stored in the form of a table, said table being updated.

7. A conversation processing apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein, when selecting the new topic using the table, said selection means weights the value in the table for the first information having the same attributes as those of the second information and uses the weighted table, thereby selecting the new topic.

8. A conversation processing apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the conversation is held in one of orally and in written form.

9. A conversation processing apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said conversation processing apparatus is included in a robot.

10. A conversation processing method for a conversation processing apparatus for holding a conversation with a user, comprising:

a storage controlling step of controlling storage of information concerning a plurality of topics;

a determining step of determining whether to change the topic;

a selecting step of selecting, when the topic is determined to be changed in said determining step, a topic which is determined to be appropriate as a new topic from among the topics stored in said storage controlling step; and

a changing step of using the information concerning the topic selected in said selecting step as information concerning the new topic, thereby changing the topic.

11. A recording medium having recorded thereon a computer-readable conversation processing program for holding a conversation with a user, the program comprising:

a storage controlling step of controlling storage of information concerning a plurality of topics;

a determining step of determining whether to change the topic;

a selecting step of selecting, when the topic is

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determined to be changed in said determining step, a topic which is determined to be appropriate as a new topic from among the topics stored in said storage controlling step; and

a changing step of using the information concerning the topic selected in said selecting step as information concerning the new topic, thereby changing the topic.

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